

## Are You All Washed Up?

One simple habit could help you avoid many common infectious diseases, at least much of the time. The same practice could also save you from serious chronic or acute illness caused by chemical exposure.

This habit is washing your hands frequently and thoroughly. Illnesses such as the flu, colds, and digestive upsets are often spread by touching a contaminated surface and then touching your mouth, eyes, or nose, or handling food. In addition, chemicals on your hands can enter your body after you touch food, beverages, dishes, glasses, utensils, cigarettes, cosmetics, and other objects.

### *Here are some of the occasions when you should wash your hands:*

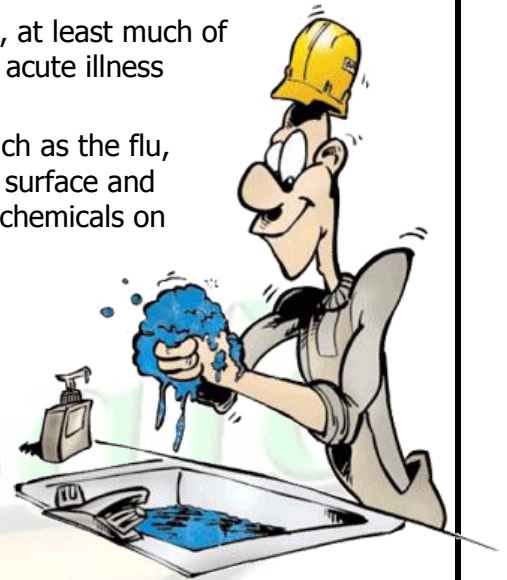
- ◆ Always wash up before eating.
- ◆ Wash your hands before preparing food to prevent food poisoning and the spread of disease. Wash before you handle each different food, for example, in between cutting up the raw chicken and dicing the vegetables.
- ◆ Always wash your hands after using the toilet. If you have been handling chemicals, wash before using the toilet too.
- ◆ Wash your hands before handling contact lenses or applying makeup.

### *How to wash:*

How you wash is also important. Most of us don't spend long enough at the job. Use warm water and work up a lather. Remember to clean under the nails. Rinse thoroughly and dry your hands on a clean towel or under a dryer.

If you work in health care or food services, you will be following a strict hand-washing routine to prevent the spread of illness. If your work requires you to wash your hands frequently you may develop problems with dry, irritated skin. Apply moisturizers frequently to prevent chapping. Skin excessively dry from washing is prone to infection. Talk to your supervisor about the use of protective gloves and barrier creams if appropriate for your work.

Avoid chemical contact with your skin. Use the correct procedures and the proper Personal Protective Equipment to prevent exposure. An important part of protecting yourself against chemical exposure is to wash thoroughly after you remove PPE such as gloves.



***Washing your hands regularly is a simple habit we learned as small children. It is just as important for adults to prevent infectious agents and contaminants from entering the body.***

